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**Statement by Robert Klein, Chair Ed Penhoet, Vice Chair Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee For the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine Regarding the News Conference Today in Sacramento by State Senato**

Posted: March 16, 2005

Emeryville, CA – Robert Klein and Ed Penhoet, Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, of the Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee for the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, made the following statement regarding today's news conference in Sacramento by State Senators Deborah Ortiz and George Runner:

"First of all, we want to acknowledge and express our appreciation to Senator Ortiz for her leadership in the area of stem cell research in Sacramento and throughout the State of California.

Senator Ortiz and the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine share the same goal: to support stem cell research and to ensure that California leads the way for finding cures for people with disease, illness and injury.

60 % of California voters cast their ballots last Fall, and more than 70 patient and disease advocacy groups, and medical, research and scientific organizations affirmed their hope in the promise of stem cell cures. Their votes were not only an expression of hope, but also a vote of confidence that the Prop. 71 initiative contains sufficient governance, oversight and accountability mechanisms to address the very same issues Senators Ortiz and Runner discussed today.

The initiative anticipated and the Institute is structured to provide significant conflict of interest regulations AND medical and ethical standards, especially those that protect women, based upon recognized and respected standards adopted by the National Institutes of Health. Those regulations and standards are in process of being developed by the Institute's governing board, the ICOC, its subcommittees and working groups. The public and all interested parties have been, will be – and should be – active participants in this process. In addition, the National Academies of Sciences and Medicine are currently in the process of developing model medical and ethical standards for stem cell research – specifically to meet California's timeline -- which are due public in April and shall be taken into full consideration by the Institute and the public in the coming months. And, it is important to note, that there are federal regulations already in place that will apply to future research conducted with Prop 71 grants to ensure the appropriate protections for all patients.

In the short few months that this Institute has been in place, we have made significant progress towards setting appropriate and necessary conflict of interest rules for staff. The ICOC is committed to adopting stringent conflict of interest policies and medical and ethical standards – with input from the public. In fact, we have now held 13 open public meetings in just 13 weeks.

We welcome Senator Ortiz, Senator Runner and their colleagues' participation in this ongoing process, and we look forward to collaborating together with members of the Legislature and the public in this important endeavor.

At the time same time, the voters of California sent a clear message: they entrusted the Institute's governing board, which is comprised of 29 prominent Californians -- leaders in academia, science, medicine, research, patient advocacy and business -- to move forward with the work ahead. This Board is dedicated to addressing all and more of the issues addressed by Senators Ortiz and Runner today."

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